

Contributor: **Luca Graverini**
Dipartimento di Teoria e documentazione delle tradizioni culturali
Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia di Arezzo
v.le Cittadini, 33
52100 Arezzo
Italy

email: graverini@unisi.it
web: <http://digilander.libero.it/lucagraverini/>

Title: ***Of Mice and Poets. Horace's Sat. 2.6 and Callimachus***

Language: English

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Outline of the contents:

The main theme of Horace's *Satire* 2.6 is apparently the opposition between rustic and urban life, also echoed in the final tale of the two mice. Yet, the choice of an appropriate lifestyle is tightly connected to the definition of the proper style and subject matter for satiric poetry: at vv. 14-18, a couple of clear allusions to Callimachus leave the reader with the impression that rustic and simple life, Alexandrian aesthetics, and satire can, and indeed should, harmoniously blend.

Actually, this is a rather provocative stance. The sophistication of Callimachean poetry, for example, would not seem to mix well with rustic life; above all, the same is true for satire itself. As Kirk Freudenburg has recently shown (in "Dictynna" 3, 2006), satire needs an urban setting, while rustic bliss is a more suitable subject matter for lyric poetry: so, in *Satire* 2.6 – and more generally in *Sermones* Book 2 – there is a constant tension between high and low poetic style, between satire and lyric poetry.

I argue that Horace's appropriation of Callimachus, especially in the last lines of the poem, plays an important role in pointing out this interaction between different genres and styles. The farewell of the country mouse to his friend recalls Callimachus' farewell to Zeus at the end of the *Aitia*: cf. *sat.* 2.6.16 f. *valeas: me silva cavosque...* with *aet.* 112.8-9 **χαῖρε**, Ζεῦ, μέγα καὶ σύ, σάω δ' ὅλον οἶκον ἀνάκτων· / **αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ** Μουσέων πεζὸν ἔπειμι νομόν (and for οἶκον ἀνάκτων cf. v. 115 *domus alta*). The parallel is slightly humorous: Callimachus, who despised the donkey and compared himself to a cicada, now speaks with the voice of a mouse. It adds structure to the satire, since the *Aitia* are evoked both at the beginning and at the end of the poem. Finally, and most importantly, the parallel supports a complex and 'transitional' definition of Horace's poetics, as outlined above: Callimachus' epilogue to the *Aitia* marks a turning point between two different genres and styles, both of which contribute to shape the *Sermones*.